



<p><i><b>Mexico's Indigenous People</b></i>  February 2005 and March 2006</p> <p>Part 06, Ch. 01 CRF Media Chronicles</p>	<p><b>Final:</b> 07/20/13  <b>Time:</b> 15:56</p> <p>© 2005-2006, 2013 CRF Media</p>
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**Carl:** The people who lived in Mexico before the arrival of the Spanish colonists make up about 10% of Mexico's population. The 62 indigenous tribal groups speak over 300 non-Spanish dialects. Likewise, there is a significant diversity in the places they live, the clothes they wear and their traditional worship practices.

After producing and publishing *Mexico: Bound by Cultural Tradition*, we made two more trips to obtain material for a second DVD featuring the indigenous peoples. The first of these two trips was in February 2005 and the second was a year later in March 2006.

Thurman and Carolyn Pennick were our hosts for the 2005 visit and Donny Barger was my host in 2006.

During these trips, with our base in Puebla, we visited several cities, towns and villages located in Southern Mexico including: **Oaxaca** (wah-HA-ka), **Tlacolula**, **Simojovel** (sea-mo-ho-BEL), **San Cristobol** (sahn Crease-TOE-ball), **Tlapa** (tl-AH-pah), **Tlaxiaco**, and **Tehuacan**,

Throughout these visits, we observed a variety of religious, ... as well as, superstitious, practices. Many of the beliefs are holdovers and modifications of precolonial times. Still, some new practices have been added as gimmicks to make money by unscrupulous salesmen.

Perhaps the most alarming religious practice is the devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe and Juan Diego along with the belief of sanctified dolls representing the baby Jesus.

Pilgrimages to the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City represent a significant effort for many as they travel by bicycle, buses, vans, trucks and by foot to this hallowed edifice. All have the goal of reaching the Basilica in the hope of receiving a special blessing performed by the priest or the bishop. They believe that a greater reward is given to those who make the additional sacrifice to walk part or all of the way. Some make the 140-mile round trip from Puebla to Mexico City by walking up and over the 13,000-foot pass near the volcanic crater of Mount **Popo**. {**Popocatepetl** (Poh-poh-kah-TEH-peh-til).

**NOTE: ALL SCRIPT IN BLUE FROM ORIGINAL NARRATION**

**Overlay: The Mixteco People © 2005 CRF Media**

The rugged **Mixteca** (meex-TEK-uh) Mountains of southern Mexico is the birthplace of a great and noble people. Even before the **Mayans** ... before the **Aztecs**, ... there were the **Mixteco** (meex-TEK-oh) people. Some say that in the misty beginning of time, gods planted trees along the River of Lineage. It was from these majestic trees, these holy trees, that the Mixteco nation came into being. Others say that the people did not come from the trees but instead the gods molded them from ears of corn and eventually these men of corn populated the world.

**Overlay: Mixteca Baja © 2004-05 CRF Media**

A land of **saguaro** cactus ... of **mesquite** and **Palo Verde** trees ... a place where the season of rainfall is short and the grass can find little soil to grow ... a place where cattle long for a shade that will cool their bodies and goats seek pasture among the rocks. This is a place where the **Mixteca Baja**, ... an indigenous people of Mexico, ... lives. They are located in the lowlands and foothills of the **Sierra Madre** about 150 miles southwest of Mexico City in the State of **Oaxaca**.

**Overlay: Be'ena'a ... "The People" Zapoteco of Southern Mexico © 2005-2006 CRF Media**

**Be'ena'a** ... "the People" ... have lived in these mountains for more than three thousand years. The trees that cloak the steep mountain slopes are their sanctuary. The trails that wind their way from one village to the next maintain a sense of community. The green valleys and free-flowing rivers are the sustainer of life.

**Be'ena'a**, ... in the language of those living here, ... not only means "the People" but also means "those who have always been here." **Be'ena'a**, ... now known as **Zapotecos** (Sah-poe-TEC-ohs) , ... were here long before the Aztecs, the Mayans, and the Olmecs (AHL-meks) .

**Overlay: The Mixteco Way Corn: A Gift From The Gods © 2005-2006 CRF Media**

Corn was a gift from the gods. First they formed man from an ear of corn and then the gods provided this sacred crop as food for mankind. It was from this beginning that all the earth was populated.... this is "the Mixteco way".

The divine relationship between the original people of Mexico and that of corn is nowhere more evident than among the Mixtecos who inhabit the mountains and valleys of Southwest Mexico in the State of Guerrero. In the dark beginning of Mexico's prehistoric period, ... some four to five thousand years ago, ... these people began cultivating corn.

It is not known which of the many different tribes in southern Mexico first cultivated this food crop but each have their own beliefs about how corn was provided to them by their gods. The **Mixteco** believe that corn is the basis of all physical life. Without corn there would be no flat bread known as tortillas and, consequently, no people.

**Overlay: We Are Me'phaa NOT Tlapaneco © 2005 CRF Media**

**A'phaa** (is the place we once called home. It is now called **Tlapa** (Tla pah) and few of the 60,000 residents are **Me'phaa** (**met PAH**). When this place was our home, we had great celebrations along the river that follows the steep mountainside. My people would come from all over to visit, to celebrate, and to give sacrifices to our gods in order to ensure a bountiful harvest and good fortune.

But the Aztecs, ... the mean spirited people from **Tenochtitlan** ... destroyed our life. They burned **A'phaa** to the ground and called the smoldering remains **Tlachinollan**, "the burning place". Our people were nearly all killed. A few fled to the mountains. Those who stayed paid tribute to the Aztecs. They called us "**Tlapaneco**" which means, "dirty faced ones" in the Aztec language.

The Aztecs ruled for only two generations before the Spanish conquered them and our survival was made even more difficult.

**Overlay: The Nahuatl People © 2005-2006 CRF Media**

Fifty years before Columbus discovered America, the Aztec Empire had become the new Mexican nation. With an army often exceeding 200,000 men, they were the most powerful and feared civilization in the America's. They conquered or formulated alliances with the **Mixteco**, the **Zapateco**, and other groups of people.

They founded the city of **Tenochtitlan**, ... now known as Mexico City, ... the largest city in the world. They built huge pyramids and offered up human sacrifices to appease their gods.

They saw active volcanoes as a place where some of their gods lived. The 18,000 ft. Mount **Popocatepetl** near Puebla was believed to be the home of their rain god, **Tlaloc**. The frequent plumes of steam, smoke and ash from the huge volcanic crater were considered as signs from this rain god.

**Overlay: The Nahuatl Guerrero of Southwestern Mexico and The Burro © 2005-2006 CRF Media**

The burro is an essential part of life in the Southwestern Mexican State of **Guerrero**. This is a place where the roads are few, the mountains slopes are steep, and the green valleys are often only in the distance. It is a place where the people now known as the **Nahuatl** and the burro depend upon each other for their survival. The burro, ... humbly carrying its master's loads, ...

receives an ample supply of fodder in turn to give it strength to endure.

The burro is not alone. The pony and the mule are also prominent in Southwestern Mexico. The pony moves faster than the burro but requires more care. The mule is bigger than the burro and can carry heavier loads but sometimes it fails to obey.

Some 500 years ago, there were no burros, ponies, or mules to help with the daily toil of surviving in these mountains. There were also no goats, sheep, pigs, or chickens to provide meat for their families. This was when the **Nahuatl** were called Aztecs and ruled the land with a brutality that knew no bounds. They were fierce warriors with hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Their enemies were sacrificed to appease the Aztec gods. Captives were made to carry the heavy loads; thus, the burro was not needed. But then in 1521, a small band of Spanish soldiers came on horseback and by trickery and cunning quickly subdued the much more powerful Aztecs. The once proud warriors were now servants to this new master.

**Overlay: Remaking Chiapas © 2005-2006 CRF Media**

**New narration:**

**Carl: This area in southern Mexico has been remade many times over the centuries.**

**Now there is a major seaport along with sandy beaches for the tourist and residents alike.**

**Overlay:** Coatzacoalcos, Vera Cruz

**NO NEW NARRATION:**

It was here in Southern Mexico and Central America that the **Mayan** culture once flourished. 1500 years ago the **Mayans** were the most advanced civilization in the new world. Huge temples were built as places of worship and sacrifice; inscriptions were carved in stone along with stylized representations of their rulers and their gods. They were proficient in mathematics and had an accurate calendar. They studied the planets and the stars drifting through the heavens.

The ancient **Mayans** were organized as a loose federation of small kingdoms but they were never fully conquered by the powerful Aztec armies. For that matter, ... the Spanish colonists with their horses and guns did not succeed in their effort to bring them under control.

Today, in the southern State of **Chiapas**, there are about 750,000 indigenous people. For them ... as it was for their ancestors, ... the change from power and prestige to poverty is painful.

**New narration:**

**Arline:** This is also the home of the rebels known as the Zapatistas (sah-pah-TEAS-tahs). In 1994, a major uprising killed hundreds and thousands were forced from their homes. Yet, the indigenous peoples of Chiapas continue to support the Zapatista movement.

Potential violence occurs frequently. As we drove through **Bosque** (bose-KEH), crowds were dancing in the streets wearing costumes and masks celebrating their version of Carnival. It can be extremely dangerous and was truly frightening to us. Several evangelistic activities are reaching the indigenous people of Mexico. Mission training like the Escuela de Misiones – School of Missions - is an important part of developing the skills and knowledge for indigenous Christian believers to reach their own people with the Gospel.

**Not for Narration:** {**Escuela de Misiones** Established in 2001, the school of missions is held quarterly in different parts of the country. Today classes are being held in the town of **Tehuacan**. This is one of four theological training schools located among the indigenous people of Mexico in Chiapas, Nayarit and the Sierra Mazateco.}

During our visit, we were encouraged as we observed God at work among the peoples. Their churches are small and often in out of the way places. Still, they are growing and people are being taught God's Word despite the hardships and persecution.

In some places, they cannot advertize the church openly making it difficult to share the Good News of Jesus. Some churches are located in the large cities. In a few of the villages, there are small structures such as this one behind the pastor's home.

During our travels, we stayed in comfortable motels or hotels in the larger cities and often enjoyed good food at the restaurants. At one place, Thurman insisted that Carl try the roasted grasshoppers. One bite was enough! San Cristobal is a large mountain city founded in 1528. On the zocalo, the town square, ... the Cathedral was built centuries ago. Recent work has restored the church to the original bright orange and yellow. Outside the church is a common gathering place for tourists and visitors. It is here that people from the surrounding mountains, the remnants of the ancient Mayans, solicit customers with a variety of crafts. Carolyn and I were besieged with women wanting to sell their crafts. Even a nursing baby did not stop the quest! Of course, we bought several items!

**Carl:** Kerry and Mauri Johnson and Jim and Becky Wagoner work and walk among these peoples of southern Mexico. They, along with Thurman and Carolyn, introduced us to the people and their lives. It was an unbelievable experience of observing and learning. Narrations for some of the videos were done by the missionaries. We produced seven chapters from the 2005 trip. These videos were made available for limited distribution. Five additional chapters were completed from the 2006 trip for incorporation in the DVD, “*Mexico’s Indigenous People: One Story for All*”. 1,000 copies of this DVD were distributed.

**Overlay:**

CRF Media Chronicles © Filmed: 2005, 2006



***Historia Unica One Story for All***

Ch. 02 (16:18) Filmed Feb. 2005, March 2006

**Opening scene: short clips (3 seconds each/your still pictures and mine) of several people groups. The audio of the indigenous languages will run at the same time. There is no attempt to synchronize the picture and language. We will scroll the names and population size of several of the groups. We will not include the % of believers (about 2 seconds per name).**

**85,000 HUICHOL  
200,000 PUREPECHA  
250,000 TZOTZIL  
120,000 TLAPANECO  
500,000 MIXTECO**

**500,000 ZAPOTECO  
175,000 MAZATECO  
135,000 NAHUATL GUERRERO  
65,000 ZOQUE  
90,000 TARAHUMARA**

The indigenous people ... those who lived in Mexico before the arrival of the Spanish colonists ... make up about 10% of the country’s population. There are 62 officially recognized indigenous tribal groups. Among these people, over 300 dialects and languages are spoken. The clothes they wear, the language they speak, the place they live and their traditional worship practices distinguish one group from another.

The indigenous peoples resisted the Spanish colonists by both confrontation and by fleeing to the remote parts of Mexico. Some of these groups have been assimilated into the Mexican society but they continue to maintain many of their cultural traditions. Others live much as they did hundreds of years ago. The steep mountains and deep valleys, the lack of good roads, the fear of outsiders and a self-sufficient lifestyle have allowed them to protect a good deal of their traditional religions, customs, and language.

The traditional religions, ... including human sacrifices, ancestor worship, witchcraft and magic, ... were all developed many centuries before the arrival of the Spanish. Many of these beliefs and practices continued even after they were converted to Catholicism. The priests who were part of the invasion of Mexico by Spain “*converted*” the indigenous peoples but few understood what they were being converted into. Today most claim to be “Christian”. ... They worship in the large churches, they pray to Mary as well as the Virgin of Guadalupe, they stand in awe at the magnificent churches in their towns and cities but this, ... like the gold veneer on the statues and paintings, ... is a facade. ... It is only on the surface.

In a market near Oaxaca, a salesman has a large crowd of customers who are seeking something to better their lives. The small plastic bags contain a variety of items that promise to cure their ailments, make them wealthy and ward off evil spirits. The salesman has included a pyramid and a Buddha in this collection. In other places, they believe that corn is one of the few crops blessed by the gods and continue to cultivate it on soil that is ill suited for its productive growth. The indigenous people do not understand what Christianity means. As a result, many continue to offer sacrifices to their animistic gods and believe that salvation is dependent upon their performance in a variety of tasks during their lives.

The Message of Jesus Christ has not penetrated the remote areas where many live. In the past, numerous missionaries chose to focus their effort on reaching the urban centers assuming that the Message of Christ would eventually filter out to the rural villages. In reality, ... this has not happened.

Many of the indigenous population groups do not have the Bible translated into their language or in their dialect. Unfortunately, ... in most cases, ... the people are unable to read their own language. It is for this reason that missionaries are developing an oral presentation of the Bible. This set of stories from God's Word, ... each fitting together like these blocks of clay, ... will help address the lack of understanding and put the Bible within reach of many of the indigenous peoples. The Bible stories are all selected to address the individual cultural barriers that must be overcome before accepting Christ. As they are put together, a clear picture of God's Word emerges.

**Historia Unica**, ... the one story concept, ... makes use of the story-telling skills of the various indigenous people groups. The stories developed by international ... as well as national ... missionaries are taught in a manner that even those who are unable to read can repeat them to their family, their friends and others who share a common language and cultural bond.

These stories explain who Jesus Christ is but, ... still, ... it is difficult to commit their lives to Jesus Christ because of their traditional beliefs. When someone does accept Christ, they are often ostracized and seen as abandoning their culture and religion. Believers have been arrested, had their electricity and water turned off, been refused access to the city cemetery, had their houses burned and kicked out of their towns. Persecution is real among the indigenous in Mexico. Some believers have been killed.

The Gospel has not penetrated the hearts of the people. **Historia Unica**, ... the one story concept, ... reaches deep into lostness within Mexico as it presents the Gospel.

**(Overlay: Open New Doors)**

Our plan is to open doors each year to new people groups in Mexico.

**(Overlay: By 2015, All Doors Open)**

By the year 2015, our goal is for all indigenous peoples within Mexico to have God's Story in a way that they can understand and share with others.

**(Overlay: Persons of Peace)**

- ♦ PRAY for our missionaries as they seek out persons of peace to assist in the selection and translation of Bible Stories.

**(Overlay: Protection of Believers)**

- ♦ PRAY for the protection of new believers as they are often persecuted for their belief.

**(Overlay: Availability of God's Message)**

- ♦ PRAY that God's message will be made available to all indigenous peoples of Mexico.
- ♦ **Songs from the Tarahumara**



## ***The Queen of Mexico***

Ch. 03 (5:05) Filmed Feb. 2005

The Queen of Mexico, ... the Celestial Patroness of Latin America, ... the Empress of the Americas, ... the Mother of God ... the Brown Virgin ... all names and attributes of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

She is the object of the faith and adoration of most of the people of Mexico as well as other Latin American countries. Her image is everywhere; ... in roadside shrines, ... small and large statues along the road, ... an emblem on a truck, ... proudly displayed on a t-shirt, and ... as the central monument in many Catholic churches.

Strange as it may seem, the Virgin of Guadalupe was the powerful unifying force between the Spanish colonists and the indigenous peoples of Mexico. As the legend goes, ... on December 12, 1531, a poor Aztec farmer with the Christianized name of Juan Diego was walking to church when suddenly,

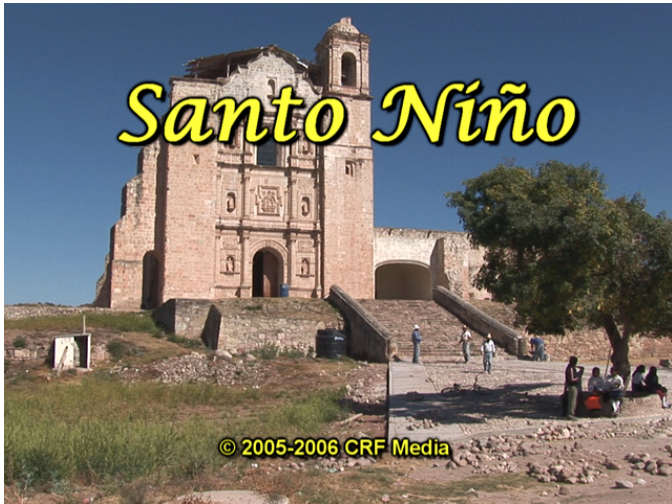
Mary, ... the Mother of Jesus, ... appeared to him. In this appearance, ... speaking in the native **Nahuatl** language, ... Mary gave her approval for the indigenous people to accept Catholicism. As proof of her appearance, she emblazoned her image, ... surrounded by roses, ... inside Juan Diego's cape. With this proof, the Virgin of Guadalupe was declared the Patroness of Mexico by the Catholic Archbishop, **Zumárraga**.

The power and influence of this legendary encounter between Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Juan Diego continues to grow stronger. In 1992, ... 461 years after the reported encounter with Mary, ... Juan Diego was canonized a saint by Pope John Paul II. In the month of December, the month of the encounter, hundreds of thousands of followers travel to Mexico City where the Basilica of Guadalupe is located. It is a time when they expect to receive a special blessing by just being near the place where Juan Diego received his blessing from Mary.

Each year regional church organizations are allocated a specific month to make their pilgrimage to the Basilica. This time the **peregrinos** are mostly young people; ... some on foot, ... some on bicycles, ... and others in buses, vans, and trucks. All have the goal of reaching the Basilica in the hope of receiving a special blessing performed by the priest or the bishop. They carry a likeness of the Virgin from their hometown church so that, it too, will receive the blessings of the original Virgin of Guadalupe in the Basilica. This process is believed to give their image more power when they return it to their hometown church. They believe that a greater reward is given to those who make the additional sacrifice to walk part or all of the way. Often the person will do this because they believe that by making this "sacrifice", they will be rewarded with health, a new home, a vehicle, or some other material blessing.

Some make the 70-mile trip from Puebla to Mexico City by walking up and over the 13,000-foot pass near the volcanic crater of Mount **Popocatepetl**. At the pass, many take the time to stop and rest and to purchase some refreshments at the tourist center. Normally used to haul farm produce, big trucks are enlisted to help with the trip. The trucks, with their decorations and loads of **peregrinos** ... are often seen at this stop.

Taking the truck was not an option for these young men and women who are now returning from their trek of several days. By the time they arrive at their home near Puebla, they will have traveled more than 140 miles. The dusty road down the mountain seems to be of little concern to these who are nearing the end of this journey of commitment. Most will do it again the following year. It is all done as a sacrifice to honor their belief in the power and majesty of the Virgin of Guadalupe. It is done to confirm their belief in the legend of Juan Diego and his encounter with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, nearly five centuries ago; ... the belief that Juan Diego was the one who was chosen to bring about the unification of the Catholic Church and the indigenous people of Mexico.



## *Santo Niño*

Ch. 04 (3:57) Filmed Feb. 2005, March 2006

The worn steps climb up and over where a pyramid stood. ... Human sacrifices to the ancient gods are no more. ... Grass is growing between the cracks. ... Workmen are repairing some of the mortar that has broken off. Others are sealing the ancient cobble stone walkway. ... The saints carefully carved in stone and mounted on the front of the building points to the importance of this religious shrine. The Dominican Church of **Yanhuatlán**, 74 miles northwest of **Oaxaca**, is officially known as the **Templo y Ex convento de Santo Domingo de Guzman**. The present church was begun in 1541 by Father Domingo de la Cruz but not finished for another 33 years. Providing the labor, were thousands of **Zapateco**, **Mixteco**, Aztec, and other people

groups who lived in the area long before the arrival of the Spanish Colonists. Several changes have been made to this enormous structure over the centuries. It has also withstood many earthquakes testifying to the skill of these workers and to their devotion in maintaining the place of worship.

Inside this huge building, a celebration is going on. Hundreds of people have arrived to be part of this annual event. ... The priest and his helpers are ready. ... The gold trim on the statues and supporting columns has all been cleaned and polished. ... The people are dressed in their finest garments. ... Recorded music comes through the speakers while high above the worshippers, the huge pipe organ remains silent. Everything is ready as the focus of the procession begins. To an outsider,

it appears that those entering the church are simply carrying a large well-dressed doll, but ... to the participants who have come to this great hall ... it is Santo Niño, the Holy Child.

As representations of the Baby Jesus, the dolls are brought up to the front of the church and placed on the altar where the priest bestows a special blessing on each. They are thought to impart protection, health and good fortune to the owner and to the household. Friends and family come to pray to a sanctified doll and the owner is paid for the privilege.

Each year on February the second, people from all over the country dress up their special dolls and bring them to the priest for a renewal of the sanctification.

These sanctified dolls are also placed in churches throughout the area, ... in roadside shrines, ... and in places of business. Often Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is shown holding the doll whereas, women are often seen carrying a doll on the back as they would a living baby.

The Santo Niño is just one of the many worship practices of the indigenous peoples of Mexico. It is believed that through these works they will have a better life for themselves and for their children. It is a practice that goes back to the times when the steps to the Dominican Church of **Yanhuitlán** were new. Like this great Dominican church, little has changed from these early times.



## *The Mixteco People*

Ch. 05 (8:36) Filmed Feb. 2005

**Note: This is to be a secular video so that it can be shown in schools.**

### **Mazatecos -- Workers from the Hills**

The Mazateco People, about 350,000 in all, call themselves *ha shuta enima*, which in their language means "we workers from the hills, humble, people of custom". A rugged and independent people who were never conquered by the Spanish colonists, the Mazatecos never accepted the Spanish language or the God of the Spaniards. In reality, they kept their pagan gods and renamed them to appease the Catholic priests. The Mazatecos still farm the steep mountain slopes much as they did 500 years ago.

### **MAP**

They live on the ridges and slopes of the Sierra Madre Mountains of southern Mexico. Their homeland extends from the rain forests of western Veracruz to the high deserts of eastern Oaxaca. It requires about 5 hours to drive from Puebla to the major Mazateco city of Huautla (**whoa-tla**) de Jimenez (**Hee-men-ez**).

The trip to the mountains passes through large fields of corn and sugarcane still cultivated with ox drawn ploughs. Sugarcane is the main cash crop and, ... during harvest time, ... large trucks wait in line to be unloaded at the sugar refinery in the city of Calipam (**Kah-lee-pan**). Villages and towns along the way provide quick snapshots of life in rural Mexico. Living here in the mountain foothills are both Mazateco and Nahuatl (**Nah-wah**) people.

In Zinacatepec (**See-nah-kaw-te-peck**) the town square, ... the zocalo (**so-kah-low**), ... common to all Mexican cities and towns, ... features the Catholic church, government buildings, and a central park. The zocalo is a place for visiting with friends, selling items and a place for festivals. The roads are usually wide around this gathering place, but on the way out of town the road narrows providing little room for two-way traffic.

For the most part, the paved road up into the mountains is well maintained; however, overloaded trucks slow traffic. These trucks haul supplies and other goods for sale to those living in the mountain towns and villages. The western slopes of the mountains, ... despite their spectacular scenery, ... receive only sparse rainfall making it difficult to raise good crops without irrigation.

The crest of the mountain pass is at an elevation of about 8,000 feet. The increased rainfall on the eastern slopes is evident from the lush green vegetation. A checkpoint brings traffic to a halt as soldiers check for illegal drugs, guns, and explosives.

The pig head hanging from the rafters at a nearby store indicates that freshly butchered pork can be purchased along with a few other goods and supplies.

The cities, towns, villages, and homes are, ... for the most part, ... built along the steep slopes. The mountain ridges are so narrow that few buildings can be accommodated and there are very few valleys that are suitable for a town. Huautla is the largest city in the area with a population of approximately 20,000 and the zocalo or town square is at an elevation of 6500 feet. Sunday is market day in this city. Most of the people, ... buyers and sellers, ... are Mazatecos. Some of the older Mazateco women are easily identified by their colorful native dress. The older men still wear white shirts and trousers. Other distinguishing features of these people are small stature and bare feet with wide splayed toes from climbing over the rocks and up the mountains.

Items for sale in the market area take up both sides of the main street. Fresh fruit and vegetables are in abundance as is fresh chicken. Dried fish, as well as fresh fish, are available in some of the stands. Cheese can be purchased in other stands. Looking around, hot peppers of all varieties ... both red and green ... are readily available. For the visitor, a surprise awaits ... ice cream! Hardware stores offer shovels, buckets, and molinos, ... hand carved stone grinders, ... used to grind corn into the meal known as masa.

The very few tourists who visit this area are well rewarded by hand made items and, ... at a bargain price.

Pickup trucks are used as taxis and the meaning of "always room for one more" is quickly learned. Occasionally, a funeral procession winds through town, but this is not a funeral. Instead, it is honoring a deceased relative on the anniversary of her death. The sign says Maria Apolonia Gonzalez on the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death---rest in peace.\_

About a 30 minute drive down the hill and in a valley is the town of San Antonio at an elevation of 4,300 feet. The zocalo follows the common theme with a church, the government building and people congregating in and around the park.

The public school is located about a half mile down the road. This school is for first through sixth grade. It is also a boarding school for children who live too far from town to commute each day. The high school students must travel to Huautla, but parents who want their children to have a better education send them to Oaxaca or Puebla to boarding school. Today is the last day and, before they can be dismissed for the season, the children are working to clean up in and around their school.

In this town, the residents, ... like the students, ... are required to spend part of the day each week on cleaning and repairs of the city streets and sidewalks.

Most of the people are farmers. Some of the farms are located near the school, while others are on small patches of ground along the creek that runs through town. Still others are high up on the steep slopes. Beans, sugarcane, and corn are the main crops. A few years ago, when the price was high, coffee beans were an important cash crop, but now they are harvested only for personal use.

Jobs are difficult to find and some spend many hours breaking rock into gravel in order to earn a few pesos. The more ingenious workers have mechanized the gravel making equipment. This contraption is noisy but it gets the job done.

Sugarcane, while grown in abundance, is not for sugar. Instead, the juice extracted from the stalks is used to make the alcoholic beverage known as tepache (**te-päch-e**). The stills for brewing the tepache are illegal, but are very common. All the equipment is here ... including the distillery with its condensing tanks. Just outside of the building that houses the distillery is a small bench made from a pole that provides a place for the local residents to sit and drink the freshly brewed spirits. This operation provides a good income for the owner.

Up until a few years ago the town of San Pedro was accessible only by foot or horseback. Now one can reach the town by its narrow dirt road. Like most of the towns in the Sierra Mazateca, it is built on the steep slopes of the mountains, but the common features of the zocalo are here also. Advice from the residents is essential for selecting the correct road that leads out of the town.

Basketball is the main sport played in school. Some of the towns like Huautla and San Antonio have well constructed outdoor basketball courts. Other areas, however, have just a backboard and a hoop along the side of the road or leaning against a building.

The homes of the residents living in town are mostly masonry construction with concrete or tin roofs. At the edges of the towns many of the homes have tin roofs with walls of large cane plastered with mud and straw. Most of the rural homes have a packed dirt floor. Further out in the rural areas thatched roofs are common much as they were when the Spaniards first arrived here. Electricity has only just arrived in some areas and is primarily used for lights. Many villages still don't have



electric power. There is no television access, however, a radio station out of Huautla operates for a few hours each day.

While a few now cook with propane, most still use the Mazateco stove. This is a large platform made of wood. The tabletop that serves as the cooking area is covered with 4 to 6 inches of dirt. The wood fire is placed in the middle of the stove where the meal is cooked in large clay or aluminum pots. This stove is usually located in the same room of the house as the eating area. Smoke from the fire eventually makes its way out an open window or through a crack between the roof and wall.

The homeland of the Mazateco people is a beautiful but a difficult place to live ... and difficult to visit. Yet, it is a place that you will enjoy while walking among these people that know little of the outside world. Improved roads, schools, and communication are changing the way of life for the Mazatecos. Internet access is opening the world to them. Will these “workers from the hills” remain a humble people of custom? Won’t you plan to visit the Mazatecos soon? There is always room for one more!



## ***Mixteca Baja***

Ch. 06 (5:25) Filmed Feb. 2005

A land of **saguaro** cactus ... of **mesquite** and **Palo Verde** trees ... a place where the season of rainfall is short and the grass can find little soil to grow ... a place where cattle long for a shade that will cool their bodies and goats seek pasture among the rocks. This is a place where the **Mixteca Baja**, ... an indigenous people of Mexico, ... lives. They are located in the lowlands and foothills of the **Sierra Madre** about 150 miles southwest of Mexico City in the State of **Oaxaca**.

This area may appear void of economic resources, but this is not the case. There are many small towns and cities scattered throughout these hills, valleys, and plains.

Residents of the small town of **San Antonio Tlaxcala** mine onyx and carve it into a variety of items suitable for the tourist trade. A salt mine provides employment for some. This mine has been in operation for decades. The salt collected from the leeching pool is dried, sacked, and carried to a storage shed awaiting shipment.

Generations have come and gone but little has changed in the lives of the **Mixteca Baja**. It was in centuries past that large churches were constructed on orders from the Spanish priests. These Catholic Churches continue to be the central focus of the towns scattered along Highway 125 that runs south from **Puebla** to **Oaxaca**. The large city of **Huajuapán de León** is the administrative and economic center for the area. People congregate around the **zocalo** to visit with friends ... to get their shoes repaired, get a haircut or just relax under the shade trees. The large church located on one side of the **zocalo** reminds all that the Catholic church and the people are one and the same. Over 95% of those living here claim allegiance to the Catholic faith, but their faith is like the ringing of the church bells, ... a tradition that has little impact on their lifestyle. They have little knowledge of Biblical truths and continue to cling tightly to the pagan worship practices they followed before the arrival of the Spanish. Less than 1% are evangelical Christians.

There are opportunities for the **Mixteca Baja** to learn more about Christ and God’s Word. On the edge of **Huajuapán** is a small church, ... **Primera Iglesia Bautista Getsemani**. **Augustine Meneses** is the pastor of this congregation of about 90 believers. Listen to his vision about sharing the Word of God.

*(Augustine on camera.)*

*Use another voice here for portion below.*

**The church has three goals for this year.**

- 1. To bring the three missions in Zapotitlan Palma , Las Huertas , and Colonia Militar to become churches with local pastors.**
- 2. To start a school of missions to train pastors and missionaries for the Mixteca Baja.**
- 3. To start works in the outlying towns of Tonalá, Las Montas, and others.**

**Each Saturday they have a youth evangelism study and the youth go out to practice what they study in the community.** Further away, ... but still a suburb of **Huajuapán**, ... is the small community of **Zapotitlan Palma** and another church **Sinai** where God’s Word is taught. The church’s young pastor **Miguel Paz** ... despite opposition from Catholic

priests ... teaches the truths from the Bible. Five Catholic Churches are located in this community. Another one is being built on a hill overlooking the site where Pastor **Miguel** and his small congregation are planning a major expansion. The members are financing the construction. Many contribute to this expense by making and selling baskets ... as well as donating a portion of their corn and bean harvest. They plan to build the church themselves, as they are able. The church is growing in faith and knowledge of God's word and is becoming a strong missionary church. As **Miguel** moves on to start other churches, one of the men of the church will become pastor and continue the work as well as reaching out to other villages.

There are seats for 30 in their small building, but the regular attendance is about 35. More room is needed now as people respond to the teaching of God's Word. Listen as Pastor **Miguel** shares his commitment and vision for this small church.

**(on camera comments)**

*Use another voice here for portion below.*

**I came to work with Pastor Augustine two years ago after finishing the school of missions in Chiapas.**

**The move brought cultural conflict and shock just as if the move had been to another country. The language, customs, food, climate, and people were all different. I began work in Zapotitlan with a family of new believers and the work has grown steadily. Now I am starting a new work in the next village of Chila de las Flores in the home of another family of new believers.**

God is moving among the **Mixteca Baja**. New Christians, ... some who found Christ in the USA, ... are seeking help to grow and start churches in their hometowns. The need for pastors and missionaries is great. Pray for Pastors **Augustine** and **Miguel** as they work among their people in this hot and dusty land. Pray that God will call out young men and women to reap the harvest for truly ... *"the harvest is great and the workers few"*.



## ***Escuela de Misiones***

Ch. 07 (3:15) Filmed Feb. 2005

Approximately 60 miles southwest of the large city of **Puebla**, Mexico is the town of **Tehuacan**. **Tehuacan** is a very old town located in the foothills of the Sierra Madre. It is a town mixed with people who have come in from the outside and the **Mixtecos**, ... an indigenous people of the area. There are two chicken processing plants here, as well as other light industries that attract people from the mountains seeking employment and a better life.

The Catholic Church, to which most claim allegiance, is located on the town square. Also near the center of town is the **Iglesia Bautista Emanuel**.

Not far away is its sister church, **Iglesia Bautista Pueblo de Dios**. These two churches work together to make this **Escuela de Misiones**, ... School of Missions, ... possible.

Established in 2001, the school of missions is held quarterly in different parts of the country. Today classes are being held at the **Iglesia Bautista Pueblo de Dios**. This is one of four theological training schools located among the indigenous people of Mexico in **Chiapas**, **Nayarit** and the **Sierra Mazateca**. Other locations are being considered also.

Many of the graduates of the **Escuela de Misiones** have gone out ... "on mission" ... throughout Mexico as well as other parts of the world. They are now serving in China, Russia, and several mid-eastern countries. **Jaime Garcia**, the director of indigenous works in Mexico is also the director of this school. **Eden Maldonado** has been the pastor of the **Iglesia Bautista Emanuel**, ... **Emanuel Baptist Church**, for 40 years and helps with the school. His own mission service includes beginning the work in the **Sierra Mazateca**.

**Anselmo Duarte**, one of the graduates of the school, trains others to go out as leaders, pastors and missionaries. He also teaches in two other schools located in the **Sierra Mazateca**.

Students come to the school from long distances and spend two weeks at a time attending the classes. This is a significant

sacrifice for them since most pay their own way. Their study includes subjects needed for mission work in unreached and often untouched parts of Mexico and the world. Courses taught are discipleship, evangelism, Bible basics church planting and church growth. Small classes, close fellowship, and in-depth Biblical training is developing young men and women who are making a difference in the lives of the indigenous people of Mexico and throughout the world.

It is imperative that you PRAY for the faculty and the graduates of the **Escuela de Misiones**. Their family and friends will reject many and some will be persecuted ... possibly to death. PRAY for God's protection, strength, and grace as they serve Him. PRAISE God for these who are willing to go and tell others the Good News of Jesus! PRAY that this school will grow as others yield to God's call to take His Word and share His love with the indigenous peoples of Mexico.



## *The Burro*

Ch. 08 (4:48) Filmed Feb. 2005, March 2006

The burro is an essential part of life in the Southwestern Mexican State of **Guerrero**. This is a place where the roads are few, the mountains slopes are steep, and the green valleys are often only in the distance. It is a place where the people now known as the **Nahuatl** and the burro depend upon each other for their survival. The burro, ... humbly carrying its master's loads, ... receives an ample supply of fodder in turn to give it strength to endure.

The burro is not alone. The pony and the mule are also prominent in Southwestern Mexico. The pony moves faster than the burro but requires more care. The mule is bigger than the burro and can carry heavier loads but sometimes it

fails to obey.

Some 500 years ago, there were no burros, ponies, or mules to help with the daily toil of surviving in these mountains. There were also no goats, sheep, pigs, or chickens to provide meat for their families. This was when the **Nahuatl** were called Aztecs and ruled the land with a brutality that knew no bounds. They were fierce warriors with hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Their enemies were sacrificed to appease the Aztec gods. Captives were made to carry the heavy loads; thus, the burro was not needed. But then in 1521, a small band of Spanish soldiers came on horseback and by trickery and cunning quickly subdued the much more powerful Aztecs. The once proud warriors were now servants to this new master.

It was out of this servitude that the Catholic priest found a way to build churches like that of their homeland across the great ocean. Placed in the most prominent location, these buildings are now in every city and town and easily seen by all. It is always the largest building dwarfing all the rest. The priests, in their zeal to bring their new God to the new world, required the **Nahuatl**, the **Zapateco**, the **Mixteco** and others to build these temples. It was the priest who gave them burros to help carry the material for construction of the huge edifices.

Inside ... the Spanish set up symbols of this new God. The God was much different than the gods of the **Nahuatl**. There was the cross with someone called Jesus still suffering as He awaited death. There was Mary His mother adorned in finery. Eventually there was a new Mary. She looked like a **Nahuatl** princess but called the Virgin of Guadalupe. In obedience and submission to the priests, the **Nahuatl** bowed to the symbols of this new God, but ... all the while ... they continued to secretly worship and believe their own gods.

The Catholic Church and the burro are not only symbols of the past but of the present; each is respected in its own right. The burro is what they depend upon but the Catholic Church is a place ... a big building ... where opulence and splendor are on display.

It can be said that on the backs of the burro, the Catholic Church was brought to the **Nahuatl** but Jesus was left hanging on the cross. Most claim to be Christians but few know the founder of the church ... Jesus Christ.

The **Nahuatl**, ... like the burro, ... are prisoners of the past. The path to freedom seems difficult and fearful; a path they seldom tread. The **Nahuatl** need to be given freedom from this burden; ... freedom that comes in knowing Jesus Christ personally. Jesus said in John 8:36, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

- ◆ Will you pray that they will hear and be taught that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?
- ◆ Will you pray that they understand that no one comes to the Father but through Him?
- ◆ Will you give them the opportunity to be set free from the chains of the past?
- ◆ Will you be a part of sharing the resurrected, living Jesus with the **Nahuatl**?
- ◆

**Overlay:**

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ...  
John 8:32



*The Mixteco Way*  
*Corn: A Gift From The Gods*

Ch. 09 (5:44) Filmed March 2006

Corn was a gift from the gods. First they formed man from an ear of corn and then the gods provided this sacred crop as food for mankind. It was from this beginning that all the earth was populated.... this is “the **Mixteco** way”.

The divine relationship between the original people of Mexico and that of corn is nowhere more evident than among the **Mixtecos** who inhabit the mountains and valleys of Southwest Mexico in the State of **Guerrero**. In the dark beginning of Mexico’s prehistoric period, ... some four to five thousand years ago, ... these people began cultivating

corn.

It is not known which of the many different tribes in southern Mexico first cultivated this food crop but each have their own beliefs about how corn was provided to them by their gods. The **Mixteco** believe that corn is the basis of all physical life. Without corn there would be no flat bread known as tortillas and, consequently, no people.

Most of the corn consumed by the **Mixteco** people is grown on the steep hillsides and valleys of the **Sierra Madre** Mountains. The low productivity of the soil requires hard work and timely rains to produce a crop that may provide an annual yield of only 300 to 500 pounds of corn per acre. Higher yields and better quality is obtained along the river bottoms where the soil is deeper and irrigation water is obtained from the river. The **Balsas** River forms a wide basin in which crops are grown year around. Even in the winter dry months, the soil is green with maturing, as well as emerging plants.

Corn, beans, peppers, squash, and melons are considered crops that are acceptable for cultivation without any fear of reprisal from the gods. Those who carefully hand till the soil and gather the produce do not fear condemnation since these are crops that have been blessed by the gods. Alternate crops better suited to the soil and climate is seldom grown due to the fear of vengeance from the gods.

The fortunate few have access to irrigation water from springs that flow out of the mountainside. In some cases, the water has sufficient pressure to power sprinkler systems. The otherwise brown landscape becomes green productive fields. Water for gardens near homes is also brought from similar mountain springs. It is usually piped for long distances to the homes and the small plots of land.

Little is wasted from the corn crop. The stalks are stacked and later used as fodder to feed the cattle during the dry winter months. Sometimes they are fed in a corral while at other times, the cattle are allowed to glean from the cornfields after the grain is harvested.

Women are often seen sitting in a doorway shelling corn. They also are the ones who grind the corn into meal and flour; a process that is time consuming but is just part of the **Mixteco** way.

Change comes slowly among the **Mixteco** people. This is true of their farming practices, their community organization, and their spiritual beliefs. Decisions are made by consensus. Only ... after a long period of discussing the issues among

themselves and seeking the will of their gods and their traditional values ... is change considered acceptable. Whatever is done must not upset the **Mixteco** way.

The spiritual life of the **Mixteco** people, ... like that of their farming practices, ... has changed little over the centuries. The Catholic Church was forced upon them by the Spanish colonists and today most claim some allegiance to this Church. Yet, they still retain the long held beliefs in the gods of their ancestors. Few have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Telling the **Mixteco** about Jesus is difficult. Most prefer to speak their heart language rather than Spanish but very few can read their own language. Even so, a few chapters of the Bible have been translated into their language. Spanish literature is readily available but few can read Spanish; however, most have some understanding of oral Spanish.

Oral communication of God's Word is about the only method that can be used to share Biblical truths. Biblical stories that relate to their culture and provide clear statements about God's Word are under development. An essential part of reaching the **Mixteco** is telling the stories in their cultural context. Whatever is done must be considered from the perspective of the **Mixteco** way.

- ◆ Pray for those who are preparing Biblical stories for the **Mixtecos**.
- ◆ Pray for those who will share these stories with the **Mixtecos**.
- ◆ Pray for a yearning to know about "the Jesus way".

**Overlay:** Pray for the **Mixteco** People



## *Be'ena'a ... "The People"*

Ch. 10 (9:19) Filmed Feb. 2005

**Be'ena'a** ... "the People" ... have lived in these mountains for more than three thousand years. The trees that cloak the steep mountain slopes are their sanctuary. The trails that wind their way from one village to the next maintain a sense of community. The green valleys and free-flowing rivers are the sustainer of life. The beauty of an occasional **Agave** plant is nature's grandest artistry.

**Be'ena'a**, ... in the language of those living here, ... not only means "the People" but also means "those who have always been here." **Be'ena'a**, ... now known as **Zapotecs**, ... were here long before the **Aztecs**, the **Mayans**, and the **Olmecs**. Some 2,500 years ago they began construction of

the pyramid of Mount **Alban**. Here they worshipped their gods as they offered human sacrifices, made images of their spiritual leaders, and told stories about the origin of mankind. The **Zapotecs** developed an advanced culture with a calendar and a base 20 numbering system. They used pictographs to record significant events of their past.

Many years before the Spanish arrived in the new world, the **Aztec** subdued **Be'ena'a**. The world of "the People" crumbled. Soon the Spanish arrived and became rulers of all the lands and peoples. The once great civilization was now reduced to servitude. A new God, the God of the Spanish, was forced upon them. "The People" were compelled to build large temples throughout the land. **Be'ena'a** ... now **Zapoteco** ... must also bow down to the new rulers and a new God.

The Spanish world became that of the **Zapotecs**. Large cities were built, the Spanish language became the standard, and "the People" became Mexican.

In the city of **Oaxaca**, with a population of four million people, over 60% are **Zapotecs** but few can be distinguished from the other residents. At the **zocalo**, ... the town square, ... they all enjoy the cool shade and time of visiting. Many worship and pray at the immense cathedral located on one side of the **zocalo**. Tourists from the north seem to focus on the buildings and seldom bother to discover who built the structures or why.

The market in **Tlacolula**, is a place where peoples of many ethnic origins are buying and selling goods. Many of those at this outdoor shopping mall are **Zapoteco**. They are the ones with dark skin and small stature. The women usually wear

traditional clothing. Some speak Spanish but most prefer to speak their own language ... the language of their forefathers.

Carefully processed and displayed Fruits and vegetables from the nearby fields are appetizing to all. A variety of manufactured goods is available in this market as well. Tourists enjoy shopping here also. They come from North America and from within Mexico.

Tourism is an important source of income for some of the **Zapotecs**. Part of the tradition in the village of **Teotitlán** is the weaving of intricately crafted rugs. These wool rugs are made in the traditional manner using natural dyes derived from plants and insects. The method of spinning wool by hand has changed little over the centuries. The major addition by the Spanish Colonists was the incorporation of the wheel into the process.

In other places, ornamental pottery is available. Some of these items have special meaning to the **Zapotecs** such as this skull covered with worms. This is part of their belief system of ancestor worship and their obsession with the dead. The black pottery called **Doña Rosa** is especially well known. These items are carefully hand made from clay obtained nearby. The techniques for making this pottery have been handed down through the generations.

For the most part, the **Zapotecs** living in and around **Oaxaca** have become a part of the Mexican culture but there are many who never venture far from their homes in the mountains. This is where the **Be'ena'a** still live. Their life style has changed little over the centuries. Many speak only **Zapotec**. In the State of **Oaxaca**, there are approximately 150,000 cultural **Zapotecos** speaking many different **Zapotec** dialects.

Their homes, ... mostly located along steep slopes and mountain ridges, ... are where they have been for generations. Some work gardens in the river bottom where corn, beans and squash are primary crops. Few of those who farm the garden plots on the steep slopes have access to water for irrigation and must wait for the spring rains to plant the crops. They also raise goats, sheep, and cattle. The burros, ... small animals capable of carrying huge loads, are common. The burros carry people, wood or brick and seem to just keep on going in humble obedience to their master.

The small communities are organized much the way they were during the Spanish colonial rule. The village chief maintains strict control including drafting the residents to perform unpaid public work projects. The chief also controls much of the religious life of the residents.

These policies often result in economic and personal stagnation of the villagers. Thus, many of the men leave their villages to find employment elsewhere. Often they travel to the United States to obtain work. While these men send money home to their families, the absence of a male role model is a serious problem for the community.

The oppression brought about by village leaders, distrust of outsiders, resistance to change, drug trafficking and violence make it difficult to share the Good News of Jesus with the **Be'ena'a**. These challenges along with their traditional belief in witchcraft, idolatry, and over 500 years of saturation and conquest by the Catholic Church has produced a fear, ... even a hatred, toward evangelical believers.

Changes are under way. New roads are under construction, some of the old dirt roads are now paved, and bridges and culverts are providing a means of crossing streams and ravines. These improvements make it easier to travel to the remote parts of the **Be'ena'a** homeland. Hopefully, it will also make it easier to tell these people about the Good News of Jesus Christ.

There are a few evangelical churches among the **Zapoteco**. Some are located in the large cities. Others, ... like this small structure behind the home of the pastor, ... can be found in a few of the villages.

Pastor **Alvaro Bautista** and his wife **Ofelia** started this church in their home in the year 2000. They now have the worship service in the nearly completed building located adjacent to their home.

The membership in churches like these is small but their joy as they sing about the Savior is great.

**(on camera singing)**

“The People” ... **Be'ena'a** ... the **Zapoteco** ... all need to know Jesus.

Listen to Pastor **Alvaro** as he sings about God's love for the entire world.

**(on camera song – John 3:16 – with subtitles in English)**



## *Remaking Chiapas*

Ch. 11 (10:04) Filmed Feb. 2005

A McDonalds restaurant full of customers, ... commercial activity all around, ... a bicycle vendor selling ice cream to passersby and hotels lining the sandy beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. Tourists and local residents alike enjoy this area but seldom notice the monument depicting the people who once lived here.

Harvesting of the tall sugarcane is well under way by March of each year. The deep soil, good rainfall and warm climate along the coastal plain enable this crop to make a significant economic input to Mexico. Further inland ... the tropical rain forest that covers the steep slopes of the **Chiapas** Highlands beckons to the more adventurous.

This area has been remade many times over the centuries. It was here in Southern Mexico and Central America that the **Mayan** culture once flourished. 1500 years ago the **Mayans** were the most advanced civilization in the new world. Huge temples were built as places of worship and sacrifice; inscriptions were carved in stone along with stylized representations of their rulers and their gods. They were proficient in mathematics and had an accurate calendar. They studied the planets and the stars drifting through the heavens.

The ancient **Mayans** were organized as a loose federation of small kingdoms but they were never fully conquered by the powerful Aztec armies. For that matter, ... the Spanish colonists with their horses and guns did not succeed in their effort to bring them under control.

Eventually, most of the **Mayans** abandoned the **Chiapas** area and now live in the **Yucatan** and in Guatemala. Those who remained fled to the surrounding mountains where they have hung onto their traditional culture and still speak their own languages and dialects. Today, in the southern State of **Chiapas**, there are about 750,000 indigenous people. For them ... as it was for their ancestors, ... the change from power and prestige to poverty is painful.

The steep mountains ... with small towns and villages perched on ridges or near a mountain lake ... appear to be quiet and peaceful from the distance. The roads, for the most part, are well maintained but it is often a long distance between full service gasoline stations. However, it is possible to find gas along the way even though the price is high and the dispensing method is not designed for volume distribution.

The streets through the towns and villages are like others in Mexico but **Chiapas** is the home of the rebels known as the **Zapatistas**. It was here in 1994 that a major uprising occurred when five towns, ... including **San Cristobal**, ... were attacked. Hundreds were killed and thousands were forced from their homes. This revolt ... demanding more for the indigenous people ... was a problem for several years resulting in a large government presence in the area. However, the indigenous peoples of **Chiapas** continue to support the **Zapatista** movement. The **Zapatistas** are seeking to reverse the changes that occurred in the past.

There is much religious persecution in **Chiapas**. Whole Christian communities have had to leave their homes because of threats. During the past, evangelical believers were killed and their property destroyed. Evangelical pastors continue to be in serious danger because of the bounty put on their heads. Some have been tortured and killed for preaching the Gospel. The status quo does not want change.

Examples of the potential violence occur frequently. In the town of **Bosque**, the young men and some women dress in costumes and masks as they dance in the street. Celebrating their version of Carnival, they are commemorating the beginning of Lent. Yet, ... it is very frightening to a visitor. By mid-morning most are drunk and have little regard for visitors. The partying continues to escalate and, ... by mid-afternoon, ... with alcohol and drugs taking their full effect, ... it is extremely dangerous. ... They bang on cars and trucks. ... They steal from those traveling through town. ... It would only take a spark ... a careless word ... and violence would quickly erupt.

It is much different in **San Cristobal**, a large mountain city that was founded in 1528. With an elevation of about 7,500 feet, it is a cool and busy place with an abundance of Spanish architecture. This was once the capital of **Chiapas**. Some buildings are old and in need of repair while for others, the repairs are under way. On the **zocalo**, the town square, ... the Cathedral of

**San Cristobal** was built centuries ago. Recent work has restored the church to the original bright orange and yellow. Inside the church, the gold trimmed paintings and statues are continuing reminders of the strong Catholic presence.

Outside the church is a common gathering place for tourists and visitors. It is here that people from the surrounding mountains, the remnants of the ancient **Mayans**, solicit customers with a variety of crafts. The indigenous peoples are very traditional and, thus, their colorful native clothing, their appearance, and their broken Spanish easily sets them apart from the others. The color and style of dress mark the differences between the indigenous peoples of **Chiapas**. This is a place where the ancient and the modern cultures meet. It is also a place where a North American visitor stands out among those eager to sell a souvenir.

San **Cristobal** is a city of many old Catholic churches. Not far from the **zocalo** is the largest church in the area. Construction on this huge building began in 1547. Like the others, ... inside the Church of Santo Domingo, ... there are gold trimmed statues and paintings. Of course, Mary, ... holding the baby Jesus, ... and the Virgin of Guadalupe are the central focus. A few come inside to pray seeking favors from the statues, but outside it is a commercial enterprise. The open-air market is a regular occurrence with stalls packed in all available space surrounding the church. There are traditional crafts, paintings, and a large variety of packaged goods. Here too most of the vendors are the indigenous peoples who live outside the city. Diversity is all around but change is hard to find.

Nevertheless, occasionally change does occur. Islam, ... claiming Mohammad as Allah's prophet, ... is growing and gaining a dedicated following in one area of **San Cristobal**.

The village of **Simojovel** is a friendly town. Kids play with their soccer ball or work at flying a kite; ... their only apparent fear is of entangling the string in the overhead power lines. Along the street school children, as well as adults, seem to be in no special hurry to get to where they are going.

It is also a place where tradition can be enjoyed by sharing in a home cooked meal. The open fire with a simmering pot of delicious chicken, onions, and tomatoes gives a feeling of bygone days. Some have a gas stove and a few enjoy television but the food is the real treat. In addition to the main dish, there are bowls of black beans, of chilies and tomatoes, and ... of course ... stacks of fresh corn tortillas.

Here, as elsewhere, the tourist trade is important to the economy. Amber jewelry is popular. These items are hand made in a shop just outside the owner's home. The grinding, drilling, and polishing requires a lot of work but the cost for equipment is small. The skill and artistry are clearly evident in the final product.

While **Simojovel** is much like other towns in the area with the Catholic Church and the merchants around the **zocalo**, there is a difference here. An evangelical church is located on one side of the street about a mile from the town center.

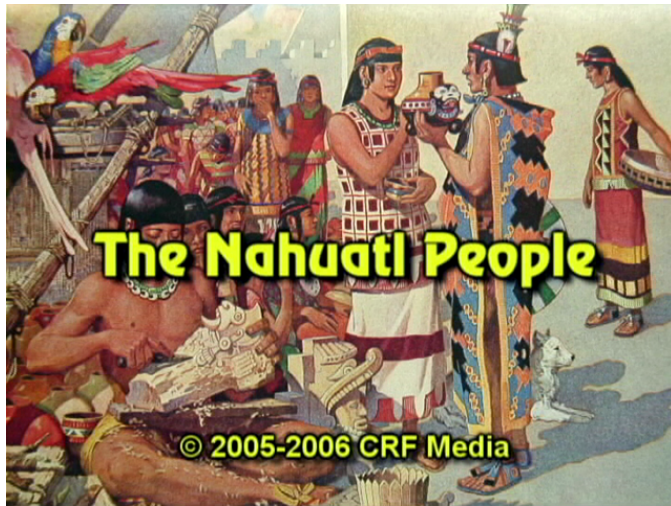
Pastor **Eufemio Bonifax** and his wife, **Mari Cruz** have been ministering among the **Tzotzil** and the **Tzeltal** peoples in this area about fifteen years. Much of their work now is in training pastors and lay people. More than 20 indigenous churches have come out of this work.

**Pastor Bonifax and his family live in San Cristobal and pastor the Iglesia Bautista Monte Hermon. This pastor and others like him are making a difference in Chiapas. The changes they seek are based on the firm foundation of God's Word. The remaking of Chiapas with God at the center has already claimed the lives of many faithful witnesses. Believers who dared to be a Daniel have already paid a high price. Yet, there are those who are still willing to be warriors on the frontlines of the battle to win Chiapas with the Good News of Jesus. Earnest prayer is needed. Will you commit to pray for a true change to occur in the lives of the people through the hearing of God's Word?**

**Closing Overlay:**

*Jesus looked at them and said,  
"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."  
Matthew 19:26*





## *The Nahuatl People*

Ch. 12 (7:38) Filmed Feb. 2005, March 2006

Fifty years before Columbus discovered America, the Aztec Empire had become the new Mexican nation. With an army often exceeding 200,000 men, they were the most powerful and feared civilization in the America's. They conquered or formulated alliances with the **Mixteco**, the **Zapateco**, and other groups of people.

They founded the city of **Tenochtitlan**, ... now known as Mexico City, ... the largest city in the world.

They built huge pyramids and offered up human sacrifices to appease their gods.

They saw active volcanoes as a place where some of their gods lived. The 18,000 ft. Mount **Popocatepetl** near Puebla was believed to be the home of their rain god, **Tlaloc**. The frequent plumes of steam, smoke and ash from the huge volcanic crater were considered as signs from this rain god.

By the time the Spanish colonists arrived in 1519, the Aztecs were in firm control of Mexico. But things quickly changed. The well-equipped band of Spanish soldiers destroyed this vast empire.

Today, there are about 2-1/2 million descendents of the Aztec scattered throughout central and southern Mexico but they are no longer called Aztec. Instead, they are called speakers of "**Nahuatl**" or simply "the **Nahuatl**".

Their power and prestige gone, the remnant now survives as subsistence farmers. Some live in the lowlands tending large irrigated farms while others work the soil along the steep mountain slopes.

Prickly pear cactus, known as **nopal** is an important cash crop. The dry sandy soil provides ideal growing conditions for this plant, which is used as a vegetable in soups, salads, and as a stand-alone plate.

Fields of pineapple, like that of the **nopal**, are common in the lowlands. This too is an important cash crop and is sold in markets throughout Mexico. Roadside stands cater to tourists eager for fresh picked pineapple ripened to the peak of flavor.

Sugarcane is grown in places where irrigation water is available. Much of the harvesting is done by hand and then loaded onto large trucks that haul the stalks to a sugar refinery in one of the nearby towns.

Corn is the staple food crop for the **Nahuatl** and is grown in large irrigated fields as well as small plots of land on the steep mountain slopes. Most often it is cultivated and harvested by hand. The dried and shelled corn is ground and then used to make tortillas, the favorite staple of all Mexico. The stalks are used as animal fodder and often carried out of the fields on the backs of burros.

**Tlaloc**, the rain god, is still worshipped by many of these farmers as they take food offerings up to the crater rim of Mount **Popocatepetl**. They pray to this god asking that the offering will bring a bountiful harvest. Hundreds of thousands of people live around the base of the smoking mountain but few fear another major eruption as occurred in 1994. The tourist facilities at 13,000 feet, and within walking distance of the crater, are always filled with curious visitors and vendors alike.

The Catholic Church became the central focus of the communities from the time of the arrival of the Spanish missionaries despite the **Nahuatl** pagan worship activities. It remains so today. Large churches, sometimes only one ... other times several ... are located in each town. The Aztecs, ... the same people who built huge pyramids as worship places for their pagan gods, ... were conscripted by the Spanish priests to build these new places of worship.

At first, the indigenous people of Mexico were not accepted into the new religion but, ... in 1531, ... an Aztec who became known as Juan Diego displayed an image to the Catholic priest. This image, ... later celebrated as the Virgin of Guadalupe, ... was the unifying force between the Spanish colonists and the indigenous population of Mexico.

The Virgin of Guadalupe has been given titles such as the Queen of Mexico and the Celestial Patron of Latin America. Each year hundreds of thousands of devout followers from all over the country make the pilgrimage to Mexico City in expectation of a special blessing at the Basilica of Guadalupe. Some go by bus and truck while others walk. Many ride bicycles but, ...

regardless of the mode of transportation, ... all carry some type of likeness of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The **Nahuatl** have incorporated their pagan beliefs with that of the Spaniards. Nowhere can this combination of beliefs better be seen than at the Church of the Virgin of the **Remedios** in **Cholula**. The church, ... built in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, ... sits atop a large mound of dirt that ... when investigated ... reveals one of the largest land mass pyramids in the world. The pyramid was a religious shrine for the ancient Aztecs. When the Spanish conquered **Cholula**, they invited the people to continue to worship in this spot, but they were to worship in the Catholic Church. The church replaced the religious shrine of the pyramid ... and ... the saints replaced the Aztec gods. Under the church ... the pyramid remains... and, ... behind the saints, ... the Aztec gods still exist. ... This mixture of ancient beliefs and Christianity is widespread throughout the Catholicism of Mexico.

The **Nahuatl** feel that through sacrificial practices and devotion to the saints they are assured of salvation. Most do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.

It is estimated that even though 95% of the 2.5 million **Nahuatl** call themselves Christians ... less than 4% of this group know Jesus as their Savior. There are over 25 dialects of Nahuatl spoken. Some of these dialects have very few believers or churches and their buildings are not as impressive as that of the Catholic Church, but they will sing of the joy of knowing Jesus as their Lord and Master.



## *We Are Me'phaa -NOT Tlapaneco*

Ch. 13 (9:10) Filmed March 2005

### **OPENING SCENE: Tim's language tutor speaking Me'phaa.**

**A'phaa** is the place we once called home. It is now called **Tlapa** and few of the 60,000 residents are **Me'phaa**. When this place was our home, we had great celebrations along the river that follows the steep mountainside. My people would come from all over to visit, to celebrate, and to give sacrifices to our gods in order to ensure a bountiful harvest and good fortune.

But the Aztecs, ... the mean spirited people from **Tenochtitlan** ... destroyed our life. They burned **A'phaa** to the ground and called the smoldering remains **Tlachinollan**,

“the burning place”. Our people were nearly all killed. A few fled to the mountains.

Those who stayed paid tribute to the Aztecs. They called us “**Tlapaneco**” which means, “dirty faced ones” in the Aztec language.

The Aztecs ruled for only two generations before the Spanish conquered them and our survival was made even more difficult. The Spanish named our city **Tlapa** since we were called **Tlapanecos**.

The Spanish brought a new God and forced us, ... as well as the Aztecs, ... to bow down to their God. They made all of us build worship centers in our beloved **A'phaa** and also in our villages in the mountains. Their priests told us to stop worshipping the gods of our fathers but we continued unseen by our new masters.

We know that **A'phaa** is no more. It is now **Tlapa** and much different ... with cars, trucks, big buildings, and places to buy and sell many different kinds of things. The people too are much different. Their clothes are different. They wear shoes that are often polished to a gleaming finish. They speak the language of the Spaniards. Our language, ... our words, ... is no longer heard along the banks of our once sacred river.

There are over 100,000 of my people walking the earth today. We now call these mountains our home – a place where we have lived for the past 500 years.

It is difficult to travel to our home. Most roads are dirt as they wind their way along steep mountainsides. For cars and trucks, it is a perilous journey. Occasionally, some fall off the road and tumble down the mountain. For us, the burro and the

pony carry our loads.

The hardworking burro was first given to us by the Spanish priests to help carry the loads of rock up the mountain to build a home for their God. They put a cross in front of these buildings and on top. This cross was important to them.

Eventually, the priests brought us more animals; ... goats, sheep, cows, and pigs. All of these helped us to have enough food to feed our families. In time, the soldiers allowed us to have horses. With horses, we could travel much faster than with the burro. These gifts are now an important part of our life.

But, ... we don't like the Spanish language that has been forced on us. Many of our people speak only **Me'phaa**. It was difficult for us since our children had to learn Spanish in order to attend school. We wanted to keep our language and identity, so the Spanish teachers were replaced with **Me'phaa** teachers. Now both languages are used. Even so, our children enjoy learning at school but playing basketball is the best part of school. There are very few schools in these mountains for our children when they become 12 years old. They must travel to the big cities to learn more.

The mountains have become our sanctuary where we are able to continue our family traditions and the way our villages work together. Here all men are required to be involved in the community activities and decision-making. Our community is like the kids in this truck. We all go the same direction and by common agreement among ourselves. This is how we preserve our heritage; how we hold on to our language and our customs.

Change is very slow. There are very few of my people that have a television. Almost no newspapers reach the villages. A few have phones but many listen to the radio. Yet, change has occurred. Coca Cola is everywhere. You see cases sitting outside homes or stacks of cases ready for delivery to stands where they will be sold. Big trucks, ... with armed guards, ... carry Coca Cola to replenish a warehouse. And, here ... in the mountains, there is no ice but that's OK since we like our Coca Cola warm.

**Growing crops on our steep mountainsides is very difficult. Corn, beans, squash and chilies are what we grow and eat. These are the crops that the gods have blessed and have allowed us to grow. The gods gave us these plants long before the Spanish arrived. Some of the fields have water from springs flowing out of the hills. This water allows us to grow crops all year around. The water from the mountain springs is important to us but there is not enough for all. The water is piped for long distances to homes in the villages. Water is especially precious during the dry months. A leak in a pipe provides water for this poor widow. She cannot pay for the pipe to her home.**

Our homes are mostly of mud brick. The mud is mixed with straw and formed into block that is dried in the sun. A few workers can build a home in two to three weeks.

My people are now called Christians. They go to the Catholic Church to worship and to pray to the statues and paintings in these buildings. Yet, most of them feel that they must continue to believe as our ancestors. For example, they believe that when a child is born, an animal is born at the same time. When the child gets sick, then the animal is also sick. If the animal dies, then the child will die.

There are evangelical believers among my people but most of the churches are very small and some have no pastor or missionary.

Getting to our villages to tell my people, ... the **Me'phaa**, ... about Jesus takes a long time. The roads are dangerous. During the rainy season, the only way to get to some places is by burro or walking.

The Catholic priests allow us to follow our ancient customs, blending them with their teachings. Yet, those of us who want to know the things of God are fearful of being seen receiving God's Word from outsiders. The priests have a strong hold on our people.

Evangelical believers are looked upon as having "sold out" to foreigners. People are very suspicious of them. Some are even considered to be demons because the black book that they carry is full of lies written by foreigners. Believers may even be denied the right to bury family members in the community cemetery.

We need to hear stories from God's Word in our language. We are **Me'phaa** -- NOT **Tlapaneco**. We can be **Me'phaa** Christian believers. We can keep our language and worship the God who created us all.

- ◆ Pray that the **Me'phaa** will seek to know God.
- ◆ Pray for those preparing Bible stories in the **Me'phaa** language.
- ◆ Pray that the **Me'phaa** will believe the Word of God and trust in Christ.